



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

May 28, 2019

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Through:

James K. Joseph, Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region V
536 South Clark Street, Floor 6
Chicago, IL 60605

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of Minnesota as a result of severe spring weather during the period March 12 through April 28, 2019, including flooding and damaging winds.

The transition from winter to spring in Minnesota was exceptionally difficult this year. Last fall ended with very wet soil conditions and unseasonably high river levels statewide. Following a prolonged bitter cold spell in January, we had historic snowfalls in February. At the beginning of March, communities began declaring local emergencies and taking action to prepare for the forecasted floods. On March 12, our state emergency management agency received the first damage reports as rapid snowmelt floodwaters began inundating communities. Ice jams caused the Sand Creek to reach major flood stage at the city of Jordan in Scott County on March 15, triggering the evacuation of a residential neighborhood. Over the following weeks the flooding expanded and there was extensive damage to public infrastructure and private property across the state.

On April 10, in the midst of this major flooding, a late winter storm with heavy snow and strong winds created blizzard conditions across southern Minnesota, closing roads and causing

widespread power outages. The snowmelt from that storm and subsequent heavy rains caused a second cresting of rivers and exacerbated overland flooding. Severe flooding continued throughout the state including the Mississippi, Minnesota, St. Croix, and Red River of the North basins and tributary systems. On April 28, the Red River of the North fell below major flood stage at Oslo in Marshall County.

The resources of local, Tribal, county, and state governments were fully utilized for immediate response to protect the lives and safety of people and to protect property and infrastructure from additional damage. We implemented the Minnesota Emergency Operations Plan on March 26. Our state emergency operations center was activated that same day and remained operational until April 29. On April 11, I declared a peacetime emergency for the state. I activated the Minnesota National Guard to provide assistance such as patrolling flood levees, operating emergency shelters, and conducting traffic control to help ensure the security of storm damaged areas.

A preliminary damage assessment (PDA) conducted jointly by FEMA and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, along with Tribal and county emergency managers was completed May 6-17. The time it took to conduct the PDA indicates the widespread damage the state sustained from the middle of March to the end of April.

The assessment teams completed Public Assistance (PA) program PDAs for four Tribal Nations and 51 counties. These damage surveys quantified the extent of debris, emergency protective measures, and public infrastructure damage. The assessment verified \$39,257,773 in eligible damages, nearly five times our statewide damage indicator of \$7,955,887.

The PDA catalogued damages in all seven PA-eligible categories. The hallmarks of this incident are measures taken to protect against floodwaters, widespread road damage, and wreckage to vast sections of electric cooperative powerlines.

Across the state, communities took extensive emergency protective measures including building temporary flood defenses, pumping, closing roads, and conducting rescue operations. St. Paul in Ramsey County—our second largest city and home to our state capitol—shut down eight major roadways due to Mississippi River flooding. Some streets had up to seven feet of water over them. A portable panel floodwall was installed to protect the St. Paul Downtown Airport, a major reliever airport to Minneapolis-St. Paul International. Ramsey County communities spent nearly \$1,200,000 on emergency protections and, at over \$4,000,000 statewide, this category is more than 10% of the PDA total.

Roads and bridges account for 39% of the state's verified damages, totaling more than \$15,000,000. Most of that damage is to township gravel roads. These local roadways are critical to the vitality of the agricultural, forestry, and tourism industries in those areas. More than 250

miles of local roads were damaged by flooding in Lac qui Parle County. Street damage in the city of Boyd is \$1,944 per capita.

The late winter storm of April 10-12, with ice accumulations and gale force winds, toppled an estimated 3,000 power poles across southern Minnesota, knocking out electric service to 100,000 people. Eighteen rural electric cooperatives sustained damage and some customers were without power for up to seven days. In Nobles County, the city of Bigelow rotated generators from house to house to power furnaces and provide heat, especially in homes with elderly adults or young children. The damage to utilities from this event is \$14,000,000.

As always, Minnesotans rose to the occasion and helped each other get through the response to this incident and we are now working together on the recovery from it.

The State of Minnesota needs federal assistance to recover from this major natural disaster. We are still working on nine previous Stafford Act disasters. Minnesota's most recent federal disaster, FEMA-4414-DR, was just declared in February 2019 and FEMA-4390-DR was declared only nine months ago. We deeply appreciate the federal assistance you authorized to help three Tribal Nations and 29 counties recover from \$33,000,000 of damage caused by those two incidents.

Minnesota also has a state-funded account that provides public disaster assistance when federal aid is unavailable. In 2018 alone, we used our state disaster assistance program eight times to help communities in one Tribal Nation and 20 counties with nearly \$9,000,000 of damage without any federal assistance.

Disaster assistance under the Stafford Act is clearly warranted. Without it, and given the already heavy burden of so many previous state and federal disasters, Minnesotans will struggle to return their communities to normalcy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Walz', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim Walz
Governor

Enclosure: FEMA Form 010-0-13, with Enclosure B – Public Assistance

cc: John Harrington, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Joe Kelly, Director, Minnesota Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management